

Synergy REALITY ✓



wanna be **DOWN?**

Peer pressure is when your peers (people in your age group) try to influence how you think or act.¹ It affects everyone, especially adolescents. Teens must decide how they will respond to several difficult issues such as alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex, education, violence, and the way they look, dress or act. Some teens are often pressured by their peers into making unhealthy decisions about these issues.

Since youth spend more time with their peers than anyone else, friendships and peer group relationships are very important. The more time a teen spends with his/her friends, the more he/she may be influenced by their friends' opinions and actions. Peer influence depends on 1) how powerful the peer pressure is; and, 2) whether or not the person being pressured is easily influenced.²

Positive Peer Pressure may influence you to:¹

- ◆ participate in positive activities
- ◆ achieve goals
- ◆ keep your body healthy
- ◆ do well in school
- ◆ get involved in your community

Negative Peer Pressure may influence you to:¹

- ◆ use alcohol, tobacco, & other drugs

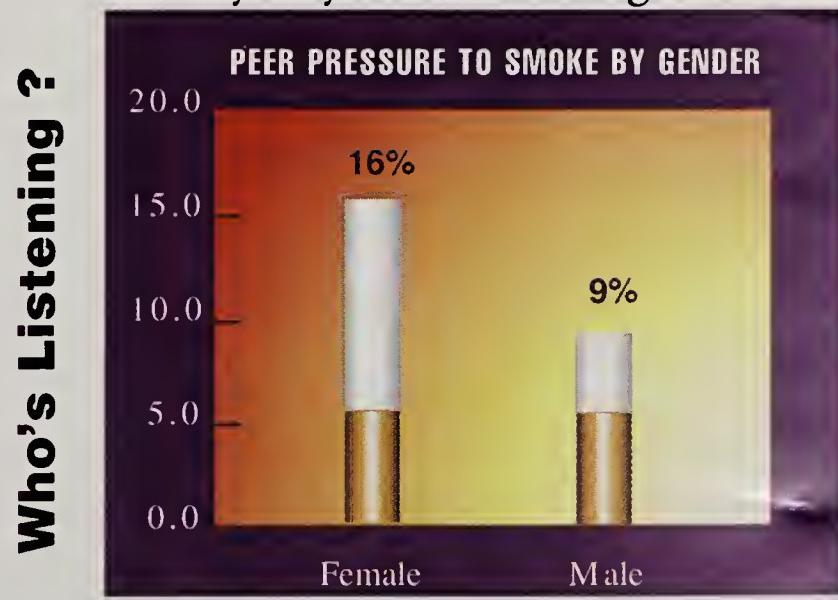
- ◆ skip school or classes
- ◆ have sex before you are ready
- ◆ steal or vandalize property
- ◆ disobey your parents/authorities
- ◆ pick on other youth
- ◆ join gangs
- ◆ act/react in a violent manner

SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is a measure of how you feel about yourself. When you have high self-esteem and feel good about yourself, it is easier for you to handle peer pressure. High self-esteem allows you to believe in yourself (have self-confidence), accept your strengths and weaknesses, respect and like yourself, make your own decisions because you know what's right for you, and you trust yourself.¹

THE PRESSURE POINT

Peer pressure may influence you to engage in many negative activities such as using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Many people start smoking cigarettes because their friends pressure them into trying one. In a recent survey, adolescents gave several reasons why they started smoking.

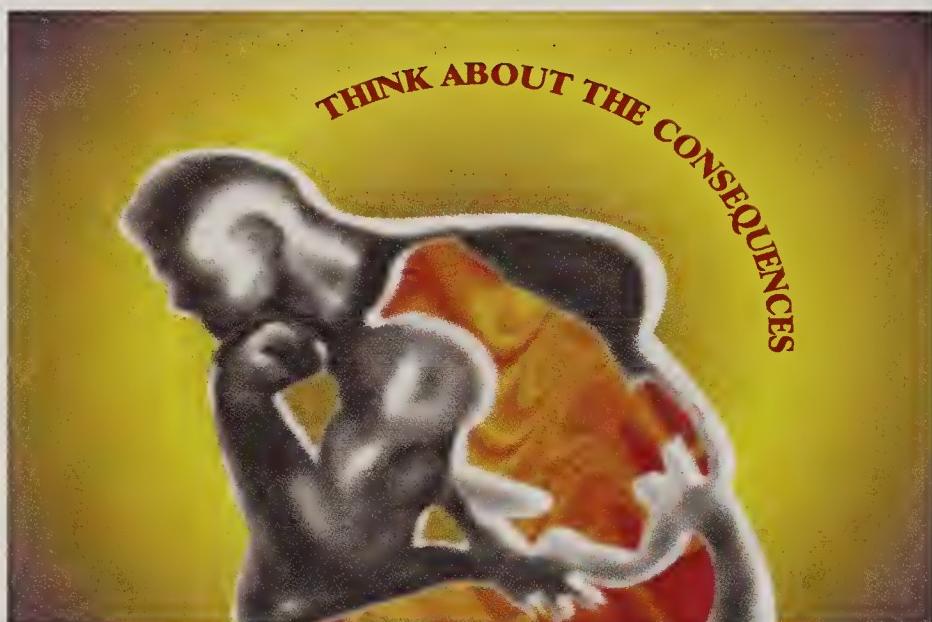


More females than males (16% versus 9%) said that they started smoking because of peer pressure.³

Peer pressure may also be responsible for promoting positive behaviors. Statistics indicate that many more students disapprove of illegal drug use today than 5 years ago.⁴ Coincidentally, young people today use less marijuana than teens did 10 years ago. The use of marijuana by high school seniors has dropped from 60% in 1979 to 40% in 1990.

WHEN THE HEAT IS ON

When you feel like you are being pressured into something, consider where you are, who you're with, what they're doing, how they are acting, and



how you feel about what's happening. If you feel nervous, that's normal. This is your body's way of telling you that there could be trouble.¹

Think about the consequences. How will you feel about the decision you have made? Will you feel good or bad about yourself tomorrow? Could you get into trouble with your friends, parents, teachers, the police, etc? Could your decision be harmful to your health? Will you disappoint the people who care about you? What are the negative and positive consequences of your decision?¹

Make your own decision based on whether there are more positive consequences than negative ones. Do not assume that there won't be any negative consequences. You must be willing to deal with all

the consequences, both positive and negative. When you have made your decision and decide to tell others, look and act confident.¹

When you say "NO" to peer pressure, you may:

- ◆ feel good about yourself
- ◆ gain the respect of others
- ◆ improve your relationships with the people who are important to you
- ◆ help yourself stay healthy
- ◆ stay out of trouble

When you say "YES" to peer pressure, you may:

- ◆ feel bad about yourself
- ◆ lose the respect of others
- ◆ hurt your relationships with the people who are important to you
- ◆ become sick or injured
- ◆ get yourself and others in trouble

WANT MORE INFO? CALL.

Synergy Adolescent Health Project (202) 645-5620

REFERENCES

- 1) Southern Area Youth Services, Inc. Healthy Choices Program (1995, July) Peer Pressure. Temple Hills, MD.
- 2) Millstein, S. G., Petersen, A. C., & Nightingale, E. O. (Eds.). (1993). Promoting the Health of Adolescents. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 3) Sarason, I. G., Mankowski, E. S., Peterson, A. W., & Dinh, K.T. (1992). Adolescents' reasons for smoking. Journal of School Health, 62(5). 185-193.
- 4) Office of National Drug Control Policy. Drugs & Crime Clearinghouse. (1995, July). Juvenile and Drugs Information Packet. (BC0005710H).

CAN YOU HANDLE IT?

1. Do you like and respect yourself?
2. Do you know your strengths and weaknesses?
3. Do you know your values?
4. Do you make your own decisions?
5. Do you take responsibility for your decisions?
6. Do you think before you act?
7. Do your friends accept you for you?
8. Do you know how to handle different situations?
9. Is it easy for you to say "NO" to your friends?

QUIZ

If you answered "NO" to any of these questions, you may have trouble handling PEER PRESSURE.

CHECK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK YOURSELF!